



A Guide to Your Farm Safety Plan

A Manual by Farm Safety Nova Scotia

Safe farming. Safe families. Safe employees.

Introduction

Farming is one of Nova Scotia's oldest occupations – an occupation that is both rewarding and physically challenging.

Whether overseeing a large-scale farming operation or tending to a small farm, everyone wants those working on the farm to get home safe at the end of the day.

Incidents can happen – and often do happen – when workplace health and safety is not made a priority within your farm's overall operations. Volatile environmental and market factors, managing, hiring and scheduling employees along with the time and focus required for production are all factors that can easily creep ahead of the need to make workplace health and safety the number one priority.

Nonetheless the farm is a place where people live, work and visit, which means safety must be as paramount as production.

As the face of farming changes and as the machinery, practices and protocols in our province continue to evolve, the approach to health and safety will also need to change to reflect new realities.

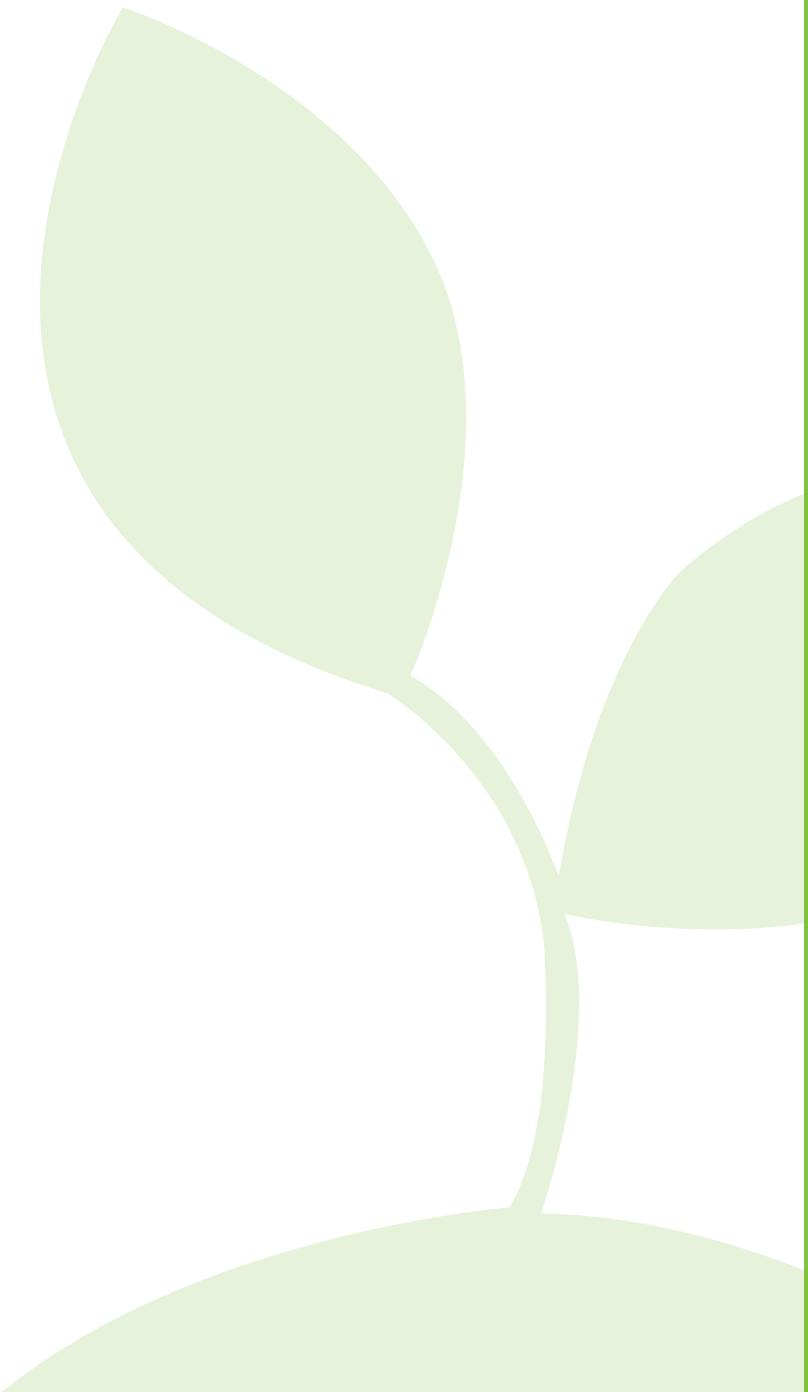
Developing a farm safety plan can seem like a daunting task – especially when faced with trying to understand and implement the various rules and regulations. This is why Farm Safety Nova Scotia took the initiative to prepare *A Guide to Your Farm Safety Plan*.

This manual was created to help you navigate through the development of a farm safety plan and to also remind you that this plan not only serves to help protect your workers – it also protects your farm's bottom line. Complementing this manual is a workbook that includes specific forms you will need, templates, examples of farm safety best practices, and materials to walk you through establishing your farm safety plan.

The sections outlined in this book will provide you with an overview of **why** safety matters on your farm, **who** is responsible and **what** actions you need to take.

As you navigate this guide, know that the team at Farm Safety Nova Scotia is here to support the development and implementation of your farm safety plan, working with you to create a safe and healthy work environment for your team, your families, and your community.

Section One: Get on Board



Why does Workplace Health and Safety Matter?

You care about your team

Employees, suppliers, contractors and family members all play important roles in the success of a farm's operation – and more importantly make up a close-knit community. Everyone deserves to be protected from injury and illness while at work and to go home safe at the end of every day.

Workplace health and safety impacts your bottom line

Workplace incidents can be extremely costly – whether it is an injury that removes an experienced worker from the day-to-day operations, or a piece of equipment that needs to be replaced. These incidents can make the difference in your operation making a profit in a given year, or recording a loss.

Recognizing the importance of health and safety and developing a farm safety plan will protect your biggest assets – your workers, your family and your business.

It's the law

In Nova Scotia, the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations establish the standards of workplace health and safety with the aim of preventing workplace incidents, injuries and diseases, and outlines consequences for breaches of those standards.

The Act and Regulations apply to all workplaces in Nova Scotia, no matter the number of employees. However, the requirements each farm needs to fulfill do differ depending on how many regularly employed people you have on your team and the hazards that exist on your farm.

WORKPLACE

The Department of Labour and Advanced Education defines a workplace as follows, “‘workplace’ means a place where a person works for remuneration.”

REGULARLY EMPLOYED

Regularly employed includes casual, seasonal, part-time and full-time employees with a predictable recurring period of employment that exceeds four weeks, i.e. someone that comes in to work every other weekend throughout the year would be considered regularly employed.

How does the Occupational Health and Safety Act apply to my farm?

All farms are:

- Subject to the Act and Regulations.
- Required to fulfil their responsibilities as employers, as stated in the Act.
- Required to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all persons at the workplace, i.e. family, employees and visitors.
- Responsible for determining which specific regulations apply to their operation.

Farms with 1-4 regularly employed employees are:

- Recommended to prepare and review a written occupational health and safety policy.

Farms with 5-19 regularly employed employees are:

- Required to ensure employees select one employee who is not connected to management as a safety representative.
- Required to prepare and review annually a written occupational health and safety policy.

Farms with 20 or more employees are:

- Required to prepare and review annually a written occupational health and safety policy.
- Required to establish and maintain a written occupational health and safety program.
- Required to ensure a joint occupational health and safety committee is formed and maintained.

While this manual will provide you with a high level overview of the OH&S Act, employers have a responsibility to know their obligations under the Act.
To understand those obligations, it is essential you become familiar with the entire Act and its regulations.

To receive a paper copy of the Act, or if you have any questions about which regulations apply to your workplace, you can contact Farm Safety Nova Scotia or the Department of Labour and Advanced Education's OH&S Division.

Farm Safety Nova Scotia
www.farmsafetyns.ca
info@farmsafetyns.ca
(902)893-2293

Occupational Health and Safety Division
Department of Labour and Advanced Education
www.gov.ns.ca/lae/healthandsafety
1-800-952-2687

Overview of Insurance

Insurance is a way to manage the business risks on your farm. There are different types of insurance available for workplace injury. Having this insurance will ensure that you have the required coverage should anyone on your farm get hurt at work.

Workers' Compensation Coverage

WCB Nova Scotia (WCB) provides workplace injury coverage to businesses in Nova Scotia. Most employers in Nova Scotia are required by law through the Workers' Compensation Act and Regulations to register their business and provide WCB coverage to their employees. However, that is not true for all farm owners and operators.

There are certain commodities (e.g. Christmas tree) and situations (e.g. farms employing workers through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program) where WCB coverage is required. But for all other commodities within the agriculture industry, it is voluntary.

Benefits to the Employer:

One of the unique features of workers' compensation insurance is the protection it offers employers against lawsuits over workplace injuries. Regardless of who is at fault, an employee cannot sue their employer if the employer has workers' compensation coverage. In return, employees receive insurance benefits for workplace injuries.

Benefits to Employees:

Workers' compensation benefits are based on an earnings-loss system. This means an employee is paid a percentage of the wages they lose as a result of a workplace injury. An earnings-loss is the difference between what the employee was earning before their injury and what they are able to earn after their injury.

WCB Nova Scotia also provides a range of health care benefits and services to employees as they prepare to return to work. For those who can't return to work, they provide long-term benefits, health care and other services.

A safe and timely return to work helps reduce the overall human and financial toll of workplace injuries for both employees and employers.

Special Protection

Protection differs for the owners of the business and for family members of the employer living under the same roof. However, there is special protection coverage available for:

- Proprietors and partners of a business/firm.
- Family members of an employer (proprietor, partner, or officer/director of an incorporation) living in the employer's household.

For full details on the benefits of coverage or to register contact WCB Nova Scotia at 1-877-211-9267 or www.wcb.ns.ca

Private Insurance

There are a number of private insurance companies that offer workplace injury coverage. However, the types of coverage available and the benefits of that coverage vary with the provider. While private insurance will provide benefits to the employee, it typically does not provide the benefits to the employer, as does WCB.

For more information on private insurance options, contact your insurance provider or the Atlantic office of the Insurance Bureau of Canada:

Insurance Bureau of Canada (Atlantic)

Tel: 902-429-2730

Nova Scotia's Workplace Health and Safety Community

There are a number of supports and resources available to assist you in building and maintaining a farm safety plan.

Over the last decade, our province has made significant progress in making more people aware of the importance of workplace health and safety practices.

Here are a few of the organizations you can approach to ask questions or get additional health and safety information. You'll find their contact information, along with additional resources, in the Workbook accompanying this guide.

Farm Safety Nova Scotia

www.farmsafetyns.ca

Farm Safety Nova Scotia (FSNS) is a safety organization focused solely on the agriculture industry in Nova Scotia. Established in July 2010, the Society of Farm Safety Nova Scotia is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing health and safety within the Nova Scotia agriculture industry. FSNS is a farmer-driven initiative, with a membership consisting of registered farm members of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. All services and resources provided by FSNS are available to all registered farms in the province.

Farm Safety Nova Scotia invests its efforts in three main areas:

- Advocacy;
- Awareness; and
- Training and Education.

FSNS provides a vast range of training opportunities as well as hands-on resources to help simplify the often overwhelming process of establishing, and maintaining, a safe farming operation. For example, a number of templates and examples are provided through the FSNS website that break down the process of filling out regulatory forms, help to walk through the best ways to identify hazards on farms, and provide clarity on what needs to be done in the immediate aftermath of a workplace incident.



As a member of Farm Safety Nova Scotia, farms receive consistent updates through newsletters keeping everyone updated on changes to legislation and new resources and supports that may have been added to the website. Farm Safety Nova Scotia prides itself on its relationships with members, working to be flexible and accommodating to support each farm in creating the safest work environment possible.

WCB Nova Scotia

www.wcb.ns.ca

WCB Nova Scotia (WCB) is the province's provider of workplace injury insurance. In addition, WCB Nova Scotia also strives to educate Nova Scotians on the prevention of workplace injury, and if an injury does occur, supports the individual toward a timely and safe return to work. The WCB also provides support in the wake of workplace tragedy.



WCB Nova Scotia manages the website www.worksafeforlife.ca which is a great online resource to access information and tools when preparing your farm safety plan. They also have people available on staff to answer any questions you may have about workplace health and safety within your organization.

Department of Labour and Advanced Education – Occupational Health and Safety Division

novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety

The Occupational Health & Safety Division (OH&S) is part of the Nova Scotia Government's Department of Labour and Advanced Education. This division focuses on ensuring workplaces are safe and healthy, adhering to proper work practices and safety standards.



The OH&S Division also oversees the Internal Responsibility System (IRS), which is the system that acknowledges the responsibility of employers and employees for workplace health and safety. The OH&S Division is responsible for the enforcement of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations.

The Department of Labour and Advanced Education is also home to Outreach Services, which develops, implements and manages educational and awareness programs and outreach activities, strategies, tools and methods designed to raise awareness of the OHS legislation and requirements to employers, employees, business associations and the public.

(Source): <http://novascotia.ca/lae/ohs/profservices.asp>

Additional Resources

Government and industry associations can provide lots of support materials, information and planning help. Farmers are encouraged to take advantage of their expertise and availability.

There is a lot of information about workplace health and safety on the Internet, but keep in mind that legislation differs from province to province, and from country to country. Make sure that the information you find is applicable for Nova Scotia workplaces.

Let's Get to Work

We know that a combination of legislation, common sense, business knowledge and understanding of personal responsibility to family and workers leads us to the inescapable conclusion that a farm safety plan is an essential component of diligent farm management. What we hope to emphasize throughout this manual is the importance of not just creating and “having” a farm safety plan, but actually “living” your farm safety plan. A plan is worthless sitting on a shelf, it must be seen as a living document, constantly being updated and serving as a tool to keep you and your team accountable.

Now that you have made the commitment to health and safety and have your health and safety team together, it’s time to get started developing your plan – and learning how to put it into action.

Section Two:

Get Started

To-Do:

- Complete a self-assessment
- Develop Farm OHS Policy
- Select Health and Safety Representative (5-19 employees)
- Select Health and Safety Committee (20 or more employees)
 - Develop rules of procedure for the Committee
- Address posting requirements

Confirm your Commitment

Like any task that you have undertaken, you need continued commitment to see it through. Understand that you may encounter challenges and frustrations along the way while building a farm safety plan, but know that the results will make your efforts worthwhile.

Show your commitment

Let everyone know you are committed to the health and safety of your workers. Post your health and safety information (examples of which we will outline in this manual) throughout your farm, in visible locations which could include:

- Entryway
- Lunchroom
- Common room

Live your commitment

Celebrate a good safety record at your workplace:

- Set a goal just beyond your current record and celebrate with your workers when you achieve it.
- Recognize a worker or team for their safety record at a workplace meeting.
- Recognize workers for their ideas on improving safety.

Tips for making safety a workplace priority

- Make positive attitudes and proven safe work practices a condition of hiring.
- Make new workers aware of your safety policy as part of the hiring process.
- Make safety a part of all management, supervisor, and worker evaluations.
- Put workplace safety on the agenda at group meetings.

For the purpose of this manual, we've provided definitions of both a **FARM SAFETY PLAN** and a **HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM**:

A **farm safety plan** is a farm specific, practical plan that will help you improve the safety on your farm by identifying the hazards, controls and day-to-day protocols required to stay safe. Every farm should have a farm safety plan in place. The information and processes within the plan will differ from farm-to-farm, taking into account each farm's unique operation and size.

A farm safety plan differs from a **health and safety program**. The term "program" is a regulatory term defined by the OH&S legislation. A health and safety program is required by farms which employ 20 or more workers and the Act outlines in detail which items must be included in a program for your farm. For all farms with over 20 employees, their health and safety program becomes their farm safety plan.

Every farm should have a farm safety plan, regardless of its size. The details of that plan will depend on the nature of your unique farm operation. The first step in developing that personal plan begins with adopting a commitment to safety, and that commitment comes from combining a personal and sincere obligation to the well-being of your employees and your family with good business sense.

This section will provide an overview on:

- Determining a baseline of your current workplace health and safety structure.
- The roles and responsibilities within the farm organization.
- Health and Safety Representative and an Occupational Health and Safety Committee.
- Building a unique workplace health and safety plan.
- Communications.

So, how do you get started? The best place is to determine where you currently stand.

Conducting a “Self-Assessment”

Establishing the effectiveness of your current workplace health and safety efforts can be done by conducting a “self-assessment” of your work environment. This assessment will provide you with a clear picture on the effectiveness of your current workplace safety measures, and what steps you need to take to improve.

Canada’s Farm Safe Plan, developed by the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, provides a helpful guide to take you through such an assessment. It looks at a few aspects of a workplace including:

- **Philosophy**
- **Policy**
- **Procedures**
- **Practices**
- **People**



You can find an example of this self-assessment exercise in your **workbook**.

Once this self-assessment has been completed, it will provide you with a picture of what you’re doing well, and where you need to address some gaps in farm health and safety. From here you can build your farm safety plan.

Overview of a Farm Safety Plan

A farm safety plan should be developed with the full participation of your workforce. This will empower your team to take responsibility for their safety and the safety of their co-workers, while also making sure they are aware of the expectations from the get-go. A written plan could include the following sections:

- 1. General Policy Statement:** Develop and communicate an overall policy on health and safety with supporting operational policies.
- 2. Identify Hazards:** Identify existing and potential hazards in all aspects of your operation.
- 3. Control Strategies:** Follow a series of basic practices to control the health and safety hazards and risks in your farming operation.
- 4. Communicate Responsibilities:** Clearly establish responsibilities for everyone visiting and working on your farm and ensure that you have a communications process for sharing health and safety information with everyone on the farm.
- 5. Prepare:** Establish a plan for incidents and emergencies that may occur on your farm.
- 6. Review:** Review and revise your plan frequently to make sure employee, equipment and process changes are reflected in the plan.

(Source: Canada Farm Safe Plan)

This workbook will give you a greater understanding of what is needed to meet the requirements for each of the sections within your farm safety plan.

Developing an Occupational Health and Safety Policy

While the OH&S Act only requires a written Occupational Health and Safety Policy where there are five or more employees, Farm Safety Nova Scotia strongly encourages all farms to develop a safety policy that will show their commitment to those working and visiting the farm as proof of due diligence, regardless of size.

DUE DILIGENCE

Due diligence requires that employers take all reasonable precautions, under their particular circumstances, to prevent incidents or injuries in the workplace.

Developing a workplace health and safety policy reinforces your commitment to keeping your employees safe, and emphatically shows that you're taking direct leadership. When crafting the policy, it's important to get everyone's input (especially the Health and Safety Representative and Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee, where applicable) on how you can collectively make the farm a safe and healthy place to work. This policy needs to be much more than just a written document; it needs to be woven into each and every action, task and decision made on the farm and have the ability to constantly evolve based on changes in job functions and business plans. This policy is one of the items that should be placed in a prominent area in the workplace.

Policy Requirements

The Policy must express the employer's commitment to health and safety and include:

- Reasons for commitment to health and safety.
- Commitment of the employer to co-operate with the employees in pursuing occupational health and safety.
- Responsibilities of the employer, supervisors and other employees in fulfilling the required commitment.
- The policy be discussed with all employees at one or more workplace health and safety meetings and must be reviewed each year.



As you're developing your policy for your operation, look to your **workbook** for an example to help guide the way.

Developing an Occupational Health and Safety Program

An Occupational Health and Safety Program is a requirement on farms where there are 20 or more employees. This program is developed in consultation with the Occupational Health and Safety Committee and reviewed and discussed with all employees.

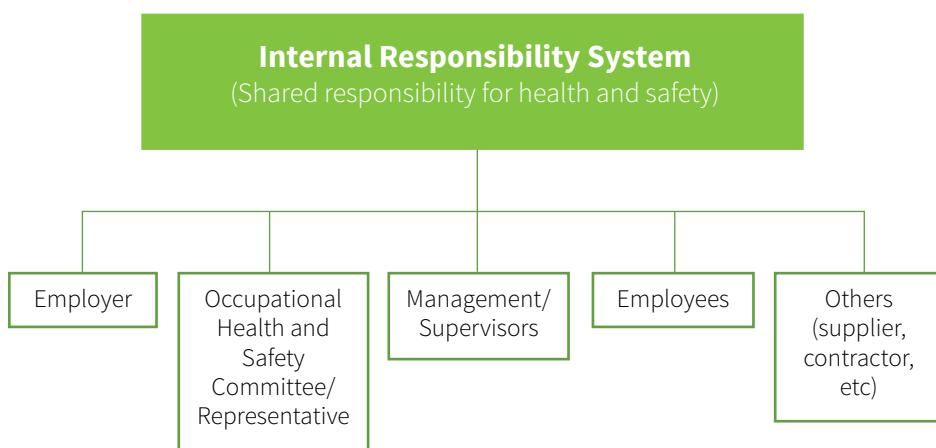


This guide helps you develop your farm safety plan, which becomes your ‘program’ as required by the Act. It is important to refer to the Act to ensure you are complying with program requirements along the way.

Roles and Responsibilities

The OH&S Act makes self-employed farmers, farm managers, employers, employees and contractors all responsible for safety on their farm. This includes people who may be working the farm business or working on their own property. Each person working on the farm is responsible, to the extent of their authority, for the health and safety of everyone on the farm. This is known as the Internal Responsibility System (IRS).

Internal Responsibility System (IRS)



While the IRS is based on the principle that all parties at the farm share the responsibility for health and safety and for creating, implementing and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace, the employer has the greatest authority over the workplace and has a greater ability to effect change and therefore the greatest responsibility.

The OH&S Act details responsibilities of employers, supervisors, and employees. Generally, the legislation requires that the employer do everything he/she can reasonably do to protect the health and safety of their employees in the workplace. In turn, employees are expected to take all precautions to protect themselves and others at the workplace.

Duties and Responsibilities

While everyone on the farm plays a role in managing the organization's health and safety, the employer's role is paramount in making sure everyone goes home safe at the end of the day. The employer is the farm's leader; employers, suppliers, contractors and visitors to the farm all look to the employer and operator to define the farm's priorities and follow suit accordingly. As with anything, actions speak louder than words, and your team will be looking to you for guidance and mentorship – make it clear that nothing is more important than keeping everyone safe at work.

Employers

Employers must ensure the health and safety of everyone at or near the workplace.

Precautions:

- Ensure health & safety of the workplace.
- Provide and maintain equipment, machines and tools that are properly equipped with safety devices.
- Provide safety instruction and training.
- Ensure employees are familiar with hazards in the workplace.
- Ensure employees are not exposed to health and safety hazards.

Duties:

- Cooperate with the health and safety committee or representatives and Department of Labour and Advanced Education OHS Officers.
- Comply with the Act and Regulations.
- Develop an occupational health and safety policy and/or program where required.

Employees

Employees must take precautions to ensure the health and safety of others and themselves and must:

- Cooperate with the committee or safety representatives, the employer, fellow employees and Department of Labour and Advanced Education OHS Officers.
- Ensure all protective devices, equipment and/or clothing are properly used.
- Comply with the Act and Regulations.
- Report all hazards immediately.

Self-employed individuals

Self-employed individuals are responsible for:

- Protecting the health and safety of themselves and others affected by the work.
- Cooperate with any employer, committee, safety representative or Department of Labour and Advanced Education OHS Officer they are involved with.
- Comply with the Act and Regulations.

Owners

Owners are responsible for:

- Ensuring the land or premises being used as a workplace is maintained in compliance with the Act.
- Sharing information with the employer of the workplace, as necessary, to ensure health and safety by identifying, eliminating or controlling hazards (e.g. identifying unsafe structures, abandoned wells).

Suppliers

Suppliers (e.g. manufacturers, suppliers, distributors) are responsible to ensure that any devices or equipment supplied is in safe condition. Suppliers must also ensure that any biological, chemical or physical agent is labeled appropriately. If the device or equipment is being leased, it is the responsibility of the supplier to ensure it is properly maintained.

Providers of service

Providers of service are people considered to provide occupational health and safety services for gain (e.g. engineer, consultant) and must ensure that no person is endangered as a result of their work. They must also ensure that any information provided is accurate and sufficiently complete at the time provided.

Contractors and Constructors

Contractors and Constructors must ensure the health and safety of everyone at or near the workplace and communicate with all other involved parties.

Workers Rights

Workers in Nova Scotia must be made aware of their rights, and be supported and empowered by their employer to use them when needed.

Under the OH&S Act a worker has the following fundamental rights:

- **Right to know:** Right to be informed of any hazard that exists in the workplace.
- **Right to Participate:** Right to participate in their own safety.
- **Right to Refuse:** Right to refuse work the employee feels is unsafe.
- **Right to complain or file grievance without the threat of discriminatory action:** Right to freedom from any action that adversely affects an employee such as dismissal, layoff, demotion, transfer, change of hours in response to the right to refuse or right to participate.

Proper Procedure – Right to Refuse Unsafe Work

There are certain steps that employees and employers must follow when an employee invokes their right to refuse unsafe work:

- The employee must immediately report the unsafe work concern to a supervisor. The worker's priority is immediately reporting to the supervisor the refusal to work and the related safety concern.
- An employee should remain at work, but go to a safe place, away from the hazard.
- After the worker reports the refusal, the supervisor investigates the work. If the supervisor finds the work is safe, or fixes the work to the worker's satisfaction, the worker returns to work. Alternatively, if the worker continues to believe that the work is unsafe, and disagrees with the supervisor over this, then the work is investigated again. If the matter is not remedied to the employee's satisfaction, the employee must report it to the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative – as applicable.

The committee or representative investigate the refused work, and if it is deemed by the representative or committee to be safe, or has it fixed, the employee returns to work.

- If the worker's still in disagreement with the findings, then the refusing worker can report the unsafe work to the OH&S Division within the Department of Labour and Advanced Education who will investigate the work refusal.

- Meanwhile the employer is allowed to re-assign the refusing worker to another safe work task. The employer also has the right to give the initial work to another employee, provided that employee is made aware of:
 - The work refusal;
 - The reason for the work refusal; and
 - That they also have the right to refuse the work if they have reasonable grounds to believe that the work is unsafe or unhealthy.

Understanding Disciplinary Action

(Source: <http://novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety/discriminatoryaction.asp>)

Disciplinary action is any action that results in an employee being reprimanded in a way that impacts their job. Some examples of disciplinary actions are verbal warnings, written warnings, or on the more severe end – suspending or firing of an employee.

Employers cannot reprimand employees for following the rules of the Occupational Health and Safety Act or regulations. It is against the law to take or to threaten disciplinary action because the employee does something which complies with the Occupational Health and Act or attempts to use the rights given to them in the Act.

For example, an employer must not take disciplinary action against an employee because the employee has:

- Used their right to refuse dangerous work.
- Acted as a Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee member or Health and Safety Representative.
- Talked to a Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee, Health and Safety Representative, or the Department of Labour about health and safety violations in the workplace.
- Testified in court about the employer's health and safety violations.

An employer can take disciplinary action because the employee:

- Has done something in contravention with the Act or regulations.
- Has done something in contravention with the farm's policies or procedures.
- Has done something unsafe and put themselves or others at risk.



An example of a disciplinary policy has been included in the accompanying **workbook**.

Establishing a Health and Safety Representative

If your farm has between 5 to 19 workers, you must have an appointed health and safety representative. This representative cannot be part of the management team, and must be selected by their co-workers.

The health and safety representative acts as a ‘middleman’ through which you and your workers can collaborate on issues related to health and safety in the workplace. The safety representative must be provided with time during the work day to fulfill his/her duties with pay. Farming operations with complex needs may establish a committee, if they so choose.

To get your health and safety representative in place, follow these steps:

Explain the role of a health and safety representative to your workers

The health and safety representative brings worker concerns to managers and employers on behalf of all the workers. The role also includes:

- Cooperating with all workplace parties to identify hazards to health and safety, and to identify effective systems to respond to the hazards.
- Cooperating with all workplace parties to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements in the workplace.
- Receiving all matters and complaints with respect to workplace health and safety—and cooperate with the employer to investigate and promptly address.
- Participating in inspections, inquiries, and investigations concerning health and safety in the workplace.
- Advising on individual protective devices, equipment, and clothing that best meet worker requirements, in keeping with the Act and Regulations.
- Advising the employer regarding any policy or program required by the Act and Regulations.
- Recommending improvements to health and safety of persons at the workplace—to the employer, the workers, and any person involved.

Ask your workers to pick someone to be their health and safety representative

The following process may be helpful in choosing a representative:

- Arrange a time to meet with your workers as a group.
- Review the role of a health and safety representative.
- Ask your workers to pick someone who is not a manager or supervisor to fill this role.
- The managers and supervisors should leave the room while the other workers make their choice.
- If a leader does not emerge, the workers can each anonymously write their choice on a piece of paper, which would then get collected and counted.
- If the chosen worker feels uncomfortable taking on this role, allow them to decline and ask the next person.
- Ensure the new health and safety representative understands their role.
- Respond when the health and safety representative comes to you with concerns.

(Source: *Small Business Safety Toolkit, Nova Scotia*)

Establishing a Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee

Farms with 20 or more employees are required to establish a Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee. The employer is responsible for establishing and maintaining the committee with employee input, where required.

Function of a Committee – to act as an advisory body and work together to improve health and safety in the workplace. The requirements for the Committee are similar to that of a health and safety representative, and include:

- Identifying hazards & recommending corrective actions.
- Assisting in resolving work refusals.
- Participating in accident/incident investigations and workplace inspections.
- Discussing health and safety concerns and potential recommendations for improvement.
- Ensuring health and safety requirements are complied with.
- Keeping records and minutes of committee meetings.

Committee Requirements

- Employer and employees agree on the number of committee members.
- A minimum of 50 per cent of the members must represent the employees and not be connected to management.
- Committee must be co-chaired by management and non-management representatives.
- Committee must meet once a month, or as decided by members.
- Employees must be paid for their work with the committee.
- The committee must create its own rules of procedure.



The **Farm Safety Workbook** provides examples and templates to assist you in establishing a Committee and Rules of Procedure.

TIP

Use the same approach to select committee members as outlined for the representative on the previous page.

TIP

It's important to keep all committee meetings meaningful and engaging. Provide new information at each session, and find opportunities to invite guest speakers who can share industry-specific information. Employees may benefit from having meeting safety agendas combined with production information. As an example, perhaps someone can come in to talk about the new varieties being considered for the following growing season. The key is to keep the committee engaged and ensure meetings are time well spent.

Employer Requirements

When an employer gets a recommendation in writing from the health and safety representative or the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee, the employer must respond within 21 days. In the response, the employer may either accept the recommendations or give reasons for disagreeing with the recommendation.

If it is not reasonably possible for the employer to give an adequate response within 21 days, they must give a reasonable explanation for the delay within the deadline. In this explanation, they must identify when a response will be provided, then deliver the response as soon as it is available.

Communications

When it comes to creating and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace, communication is essential. The OH&S Act, the regulations and the policies all set the stage – but alone are ineffective without ongoing open dialogue with all members of your farm team.

Everyone you interact with on your farm will take cues from your leadership – if you make clear by your daily actions that everyone needs to keep safety top-of-mind when engaged in any task on the farm, your employees will follow suit.

This leadership requires regular and consistent conversations about workplace health and safety – making sure your employees are comfortable coming to you with concerns or ideas on how to make the workplace safer. Instead of making health and safety a separate conversation with your team, integrate safety into every team meeting, providing updates on equipment and safety techniques or using this time as an opportunity for safety training through guest speakers or simply watching an online video.

There are some things you are required through regulations to communicate and to provide your employees. The following information must be posted in an area that is easily accessible to your team and a place they visit often (i.e. lunchroom, staff room):

- A current copy of the Act and relevant regulations (available in your workbook).
- Information and reports recommended by an Occupational Health and Safety Officer.
- Relevant “Code of Practice”.
- Telephone number(s) to report workplace incidents.
- The Farm’s Occupational Health and Safety Policy.
- Any order, compliance notice, deviation, etc. issued by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.
- Names and contact information for health and safety committee or representative.
- Committee meeting minutes, where one exists.



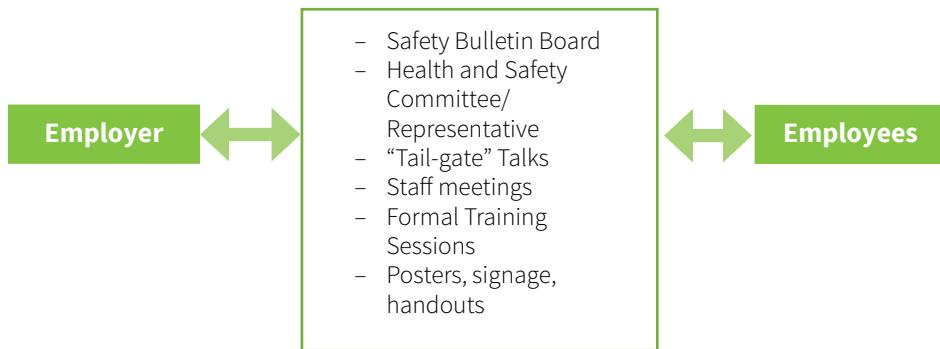
A check-list of the above requirements has been included in the **workbook**.

Additional information as applicable to the specific farm:

- Location of first-aid supplies.
- Emergency information – civic address & emergency phone numbers.
- Names of gasses stored in portable gas cylinders and signs prohibiting smoking around them.
- A hoist's rated load, visible to the operator.
- Maximum revolutions per minute of an abrasive wheel or grinder.
- Placing “Danger – High Voltage” signage outside electrical rooms.
- Signs identifying confined spaces and any further information required at the time.

Every farm is different. Some farms may not have as frequent contact with their employees as other farms. Determine the best communication approaches for your unique workplace, talk to your team about how they best receive information, and where this information is most easily accessible.

The following diagram showcases some additional ways to keep the communication with employees consistent, open and ongoing.



TIP/IDEA

A short meeting (5-10 minutes) at the beginning of each day to discuss the day's task is an excellent method of communication.

This will give employees an opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification of responsibilities. Alternatively, some farms host weekly staff meetings and incorporate safety as a regular agenda item.

Section Three: Identifying Hazards and Knowing the Risks

To do:

- Identify the hazards on your farm
- Develop a hazard identification program

Understanding Farm Hazards

In this section we will go over the importance of identifying the potential hazards on your farm and assessing their risks. After understanding and identifying the risks on your farm, the following section will provide information on how you can control the hazards you've identified in order to keep everyone safe.

It is well known that farming is a hazardous occupation and that you aren't able to eliminate all hazards and risks. But the important part is identifying those hazards and understanding the risk involved. Once identified you are able to work safely around those hazards by implementing the proper controls. Know your farm – know your hazards – know your controls!

It's impossible for you or your employees to work safely around hazards if they are not acknowledged and managed.

Hazards can cause injury or negatively impact your health or the health of your employees. Identifying hazards is the first step in managing them. There are two types of hazards: health and safety.

HEALTH HAZARDS

Health hazards – may endanger a worker's physical health. They may take time to show an impact.

SAFETY HAZARDS

Safety hazards – could cause bodily injury or property damage. They often have an immediate impact.

Safety Hazards

(Source: *Small Business Safety Toolkit, Nova Scotia*)

Machine: Includes hazards from moving parts like rotating shafts, belts, pulleys, blades, tractors and stationary equipment.

Energy: Includes pneumatic or hydraulic pressure, steam, heat, and electricity.

Material Handling: Includes manual and mechanical handling—lifting, lift trucks, conveyors.

Work Practices: Working unsafely, as a result of either safe work practices not being in place or failure to follow them.

Health Hazards

(Source: *Small Business Safety Toolkit, Nova Scotia*)

Chemical: Includes any form of chemical, such as compressed gases, sanitizers, fertilizers.

Physical: Includes noise, vibration, heat, cold, and radiation.

Ergonomic: Includes design of the workplace and jobs that involve repetition, force, and posture e.g. milking, packing lines.

Biological: Includes organisms or toxic substances produced by living things that can cause illnesses or disease in humans, such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites, and insects.

Different tasks and processes on the farm will involve multiple hazard types – you need to look at the big picture and consider all types and factors contributing to hazards.

Five Key Factors Contributing to Creating Hazards

(Source: *Small Business Safety Toolkit, Nova Scotia*)

There are many contributing factors to creating or increasing the risks of hazards.

People: Action, or lack of action, can create workplace hazards. Knowledge and training is critical to avoid unsafe behaviours. Solid leadership that puts health and safety top-of-mind can help ensure safe work practices and procedures are followed.

Equipment: Tools and machines can be hazardous. Look for unsafe or unhealthy conditions, such as inadequate guarding or barriers; defective tools and equipment; incorrect tools and equipment for the job; or inadequate warning systems.

Materials: Some materials, such as hazardous chemicals, pose a hazard in and of themselves. In other cases, handling materials improperly or using the wrong material for the task can pose a hazard.

Environment: Some hazards are created by the work environment. Look for things like the condition of all work surfaces and walkways; overcrowding; poor ventilation; poor lighting; extreme temperatures or noise; or poor housekeeping.

Process: Process involves a combination of people, equipment, materials, and environment. It includes design, organization, pace, and type of work. By-products created by the process may be hazards, such as heat, noise, dust, vapours, fumes, and scrap materials.

Identifying Hazards

There are a number of ways to identify the hazards on your farm. All employers are responsible for identifying the hazards that exist at their workplace/farm. For larger farms with over 20 employees there is a requirement to develop a hazard identification program. A hazard identification program is simply the outline of the process and schedule to be followed on your farm.



Find a template for a hazard identification program within your **workbook**.

While a formalized hazard identification program may not be required for smaller farms, it is absolutely critical to know and identify any potential safety issue on your farm in order to keep everyone safe. There are a number of methods by which you can identify hazards on your farm. You should pick the options that work best for you.

Identify Hazards through Workplace Inspections

(Source: Small Business Safety Toolkit, Nova Scotia)

Employers, managers, health and safety representatives, and workers can—and should—participate in workplace inspections. Inspections are one of the most common and effective tools for identifying and correcting hazards before they cause injuries or illnesses.

You can also use inspections to draw attention to and encourage good health and safety practices. Regular workplace inspections are an important part of your overall occupational health and safety system. Inspections let your workers know that you care about workplace safety.

Workplace inspections include both formal inspections and informal inspections.

Formal inspections are planned, regularly scheduled walkthroughs or examinations of a workplace, selected work areas, or sources of potential hazards, such as machinery, equipment, tools, and work practices. Use an itemized checklist to guide a formal inspection. The primary advantage of formal inspections is that a record is kept and any hazards identified are documented for action and follow up.

Create a workplace inspection checklist to clarify inspection responsibilities, plan and control inspection activities, and provide a report of inspection findings. Checklists permit easy, on-the-spot recording of findings and comments. Be careful, however, that your inspection team does not become so intent on filling out the checklist that they miss other hazardous conditions. Use a checklist as a tool, not as an end in itself. Keep the focus on workplace safety.



Example inspection checklists are included in your **workbook**. Use them as a guide to create an inspection checklist specific to your farm.

Informal inspections are a conscious awareness of health and safety hazards and controls as people do their daily jobs. They differ from formal inspections in that they do not necessarily rely on a checklist, and they are not regularly scheduled.

Informal inspections can be done for a specific work area or task. They are limited because they are not systematic or focused, but they may spot potential hazards. The advantage of informal inspections is that anyone can do them at any time. Letting your workers know that informal inspections are a part of everyone's daily business gives each worker permission to speak up about hazards.

Identify Hazards through Task Analysis

Task analysis is a key method for recognizing potential hazards. It is a structured approach of breaking a task down into steps, looking for hazards at each step, and developing ways to eliminate or control the hazards to prevent injury.

TIP

It is best to involve your workers when doing a task analysis. They are the people most familiar with the tasks. They are most likely to have insight into the tasks that a casual observer may not notice.

A thorough task analysis involves five steps:

1. Select the task to be analysed;
2. Identify the steps involved in that task;
3. Identify and rank potential hazards at each step;
4. Determine how to control the hazards; and
5. Write a safe work procedure.



For a more detailed look at task analysis – including a closer examination of each step involved – refer to your **workbook**.

Identify Hazards through Observation

Hazards may be identified through observation—by anyone at your workplace. You can think of observation as being aware of your surroundings in the normal course of your day and noticing something out of the ordinary.

Listen to your workers

When a worker raises a concern about something they've observed, attend to it immediately. Determine if there is a hazard and whether controls need to be put in place or improved. Provide your workers with an easy forum to report hazards. A simple report form can be made available for workers to fill out and submit or it could be done verbally.

Workers and others in the workplace should report any hazards immediately. Encourage the reporting of "near misses" as well. If you notice a worker seems uncomfortable or concerned when completing a task, ask them why. Then make sure their concern is heard and acted upon.



Refer to your **workbook** for an example hazard report form.

Visitors provide a fresh perspective

Sometimes a casual observation by a visitor or another fresh set of eyes can point out something you may not have noticed.

TIP

Identifying hazards on the farm can seem like a large daunting task. You need to break it down into manageable steps.

1. Identify the tasks performed on the farm (e.g. pruning, milking, welding).
 - a. Perform a task analysis on each task – start with the more hazardous tasks first.
2. Identify the equipment and products used on the farm.
 - a. Conduct an inspection of the equipment and products to ensure they are safe working condition (according to manufacturer's specifications).
 - b. Identify the task associated with the equipment and products.
 - c. Perform a task analysis on each task – start with the more hazardous tasks first.

Risk Assessment

Once a hazard has been identified, employers need to assess the hazard by the degree of risk posed to the farm's workers or visitors – this process is typically called a risk assessment. The reason for completing a risk assessment is to help prioritize the order in which you will address these risks. The next section of this workbook will help you determine the controls to put in place to protect workers and visitors from these hazards after completing the assessment.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk assessment – process to identify, evaluate and prioritize hazards and risks.

HAZARD

Hazard – any source of potential damage, harm or adverse health effects.

RISK

Risk – the chance or probability that a person will become harmed or experience an adverse health effect or that potential damage will occur, if exposed to a hazard.

When determining the degree of risk to workers, you must consider the consequence and impact of exposure (e.g. injury or illness) along with the likelihood of occurrence.

The easiest way to conduct a risk assessment is to assign a risk score to the hazard. A risk score can be calculated using the following system:

RISK SCORE = Likelihood x Consequence			
Likelihood		X	Consequence
Remote = 1	May occur only in exceptional circumstances.		Minor = 1 Little profit reduction; injury may require first aid; minor effects on workplace
Possible = 2	Might occur at some time; infrequent recorded incidents.		Moderate = 2 Profit reduction; injuries requiring hospitalization; serious/medium term effects on workplace.
Probable = 3	Likely to occur; regularly recorded incidents.		Major = 3 Profit reduction; serious bodily injury or impairment; serious/long-term effects on workplace.
Expected = 4	Likely to occur high level of recorded incidents.		Extreme = 4 Serious profit reduction; death or permanent disability; serious/long-term effects on workplace.

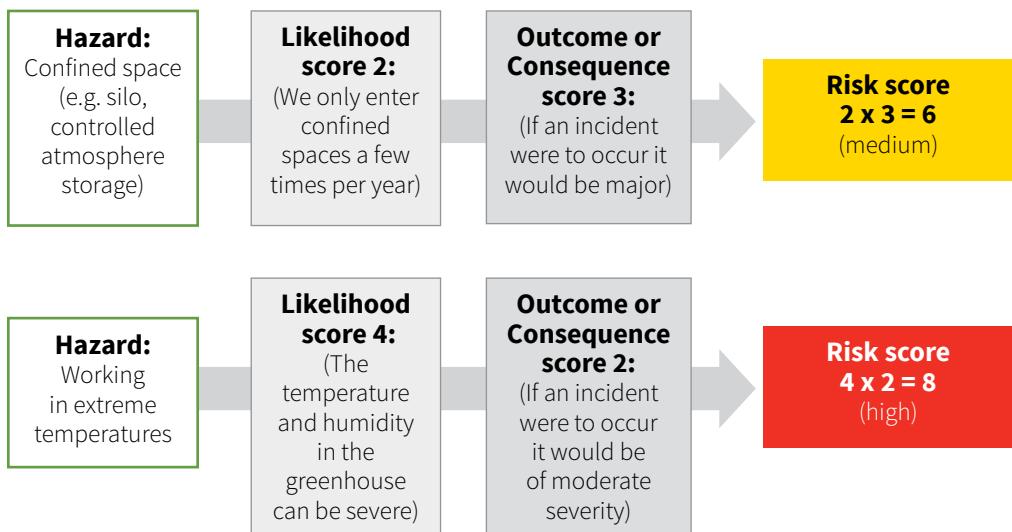
TIP

Ask yourself the following questions when determining likelihood: has this hazard caused an incident before, either on your farm or a neighbour's? How often has it happened? Could a similar incident happen again?

Ask yourself the following questions when determining the consequence: If an incident were to happen, what would be the outcome? Would there be a serious injury or fatality? Would it cause severe damage to equipment or property? If you know of past incidents, how serious was the outcome?

Have a look at your incident records (more on this in section 5) to help you determine the risks associated with the hazards on your farm.

Example Assessments



Example Risk Assessment Matrix

		CONSEQUENCES			
		1 Minor	2 Moderate	3 Major	4 Extreme
LIKELIHOOD	1 Remote	1	2	3	4
	2 Possible	2	4	6	8
	3 Probable	3	6	9	12
	4 Expected	4	8	12	16

Low Risk (1 - 2): They are risks of less significance and should be managed accordingly.

Moderate Risk (3 - 6): These risks are also significant and should be addressed following high risk items.

High Risk (8 - 16): These risks are critical risks requiring immediate attention. They must be treated as high priority.



Refer to your **workbook** to complete your risk assessment.

Section Four:

Controlling the

Hazards

To-do:

- Identify controls required to manage identified hazards.
- Develop/implement the required controls:
 - Safe work practices and written work procedures
 - Training program

Hazard Control

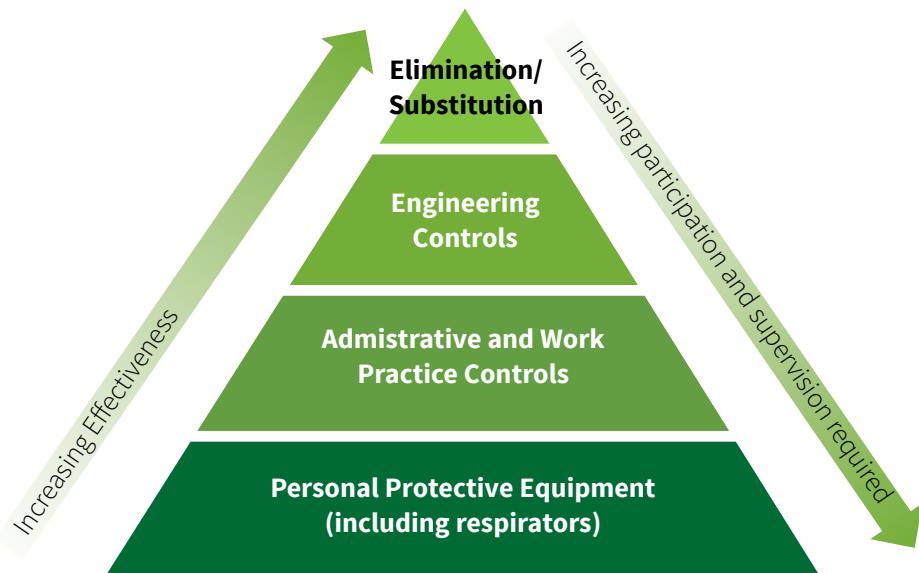
Identifying the hazards and issues that exist on your farm is just the first step. Once these concerns have been identified and prioritized, controls need to be put in place and monitored in order to keep everyone safe on the farm.

In this section we'll learn how to eliminate, reduce and control hazards within the workplace as well as making sure your employees are provided with the appropriate level of training to do their work effectively and safely.

Steps for Hazard Control

1. Eliminate/Substitute
2. Engineer
3. Administrative Controls (e.g. training, safe work practices, supervision, signange)
4. Personal Protective Equipment

Hierarchy of Hazard Controls



When seeking to control the hazards in your workplace, you should explore each of these options in the following order:

Elimination

Ideally, you will be able to eliminate a hazard completely. Examples include removing trip hazards on a floor or safely disposing of unnecessary chemicals.

If you cannot remove a hazard completely, you must reduce the risk of injury as much as possible through the methods below – in order of effectiveness.

Substitution

If a hazard cannot be removed, you should substitute with something safer, if possible. This involves replacing something that causes a hazard with something that does not cause a hazard.

Examples include using a less toxic chemical, using smaller containers to reduce the weight of items for manual handling, or using scaffolding instead of ladders to reduce a fall hazard.

Engineering Controls

If you cannot remove a hazard completely or substitute with something safer, you must implement engineering controls to create a physical barrier around the hazard. This involves isolating the hazard or ensuring proper guarding around moving equipment and machinery parts.

Examples include using soundproof barriers to reduce noise levels, using an enclosed booth for spray painting, using remote control systems to operate equipment, installing safety switches, installing guards, or using hoists to move heavy loads.

Administrative Controls

If you cannot remove a hazard completely, substitute with something safer or implement engineering controls to reduce the hazard, you must establish administrative processes to ensure your workers are not exposed to the hazard.

This involves developing safe work procedures, providing worker training and supervision, and using signage and warning labels. Preventative maintenance and housekeeping are also examples of administrative controls – keep your farm tidy, ensure equipment is maintained according to manufacturer specifications. Remember, prevention is key.

Implementing administrative controls can often be a bit challenging on-farm, especially keeping the required records; however, it is critical to develop these controls when a hazard cannot be completely controlled by elimination, substitution or engineering. There are a number of different types of administrative controls that can be used – most often they are used in combination.

Personal Protective Equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is the least reliable form of protection and should be the last line of defence. It should be used only as a last resort after you have exhausted all other possible methods of reducing a hazard, or in the short term until you have organized a better and more reliable method of hazard control.

If you require your workers to use PPE, you must ensure that the right type of PPE is selected for the job. You must also ensure that the PPE fits the worker properly and is comfortable under working conditions, that your workers are trained in the need for PPE and how to use and maintain it, and that the PPE is stored in a clean and fully operational condition. Examples of PPE use include gloves to reduce potential hand injuries, respirators, hearing and eye protection, high-visibility clothing, and fall-arrest harnesses when working at heights.



If using respirators, a respiratory protection program is required.

See **workbook** for an example.

(Source: *Small Business Safety Toolkit, Nova Scotia*)

Establishing Safe Work Practices & Written Work Procedures

Safe work practices and written work procedures are terms that are often used interchangeably; however, that is not the case.

SAFE WORK PRACTICES (SWP) and WRITTEN WORK PROCEDURES (WWP)

Safe work practices (SWP) are a written method of how to perform a job safely, with minimum risk to the people, animals, equipment and environment. SWP provide general safety precautions, but do not necessarily outline the step-by-step process to be followed.

Written work procedures (WWP) are a step-by-step guide on how to perform a task from start to finish including safety precautions that must be taken while performing the task.

Many farms have standard operating procedures (SOPs) developed for certain tasks. For the purpose of your farm safety plan you do not need to re-create these procedures but should add a safe work practice section to the existing procedure or refer to the SOP in the SWP.

So then the question remains, how do you determine whether a safe work practice is required or a written work procedure? Written work procedures are often dictated by regulation. There are a number of regulations that require written work procedures be developed.

You must also take into account the hazard and risks associated with the task and determine which is most appropriate for that task. Higher risk tasks often require more detailed instruction, and therefore a written work procedure. Tasks involving lower risk may simply require a safe work practice. Using the task hazard analysis to develop the SWP/WWP makes the task of writing them much easier.

There are a number of ways to draft a SWP and a WWP. The most important thing to keep in mind is that it must be in a format that is appropriate for your workers. This may mean using photos to illustrate the steps would be more appropriate than formally writing the procedure.

Nova Scotia's Small Business Safety Toolkit suggests that one way of writing a safe work practice is to transfer the information from your task analysis worksheet into a narrative format. For example:

Safe Work Practice 1.1 – Changing a Flat Tire

1. Park the vehicle
 - a) Drive the vehicle off the road to an area well clear of traffic, even if it requires rolling on a flat tire. Turn on the emergency flashers to alert passing drivers so they will not hit you.
 - b) Choose a firm, level area so you can jack up the vehicle without it rolling.
 - c) Apply the parking brake, leave transmission in gear or PARK, place blocks in front and back of the wheel diagonally opposite the flat. This will also help prevent the vehicle from rolling.
2. Remove the spare tire and tool kit
 - a) To avoid back strain, turn the spare tire into an upright position in the wheel well. Stand as close to the trunk as possible and slide the spare tire close to your body. Lift the spare tire out of the trunk onto the ground, and roll it to the flat tire.

And so on...

Other ways to write safe work practices include:

- using a flow-chart format
- creating a table with column headings of “Task Steps | Potential Hazards | Hazard Controls”
- using photos or pictograms to illustrate the steps (helpful for workers with literacy challenges)
- creating a bulleted list of steps

As you develop your safe work practices, ensure any hazard controls that are repeated throughout are identified early in the document. In the changing tire example, you could include a note at the beginning to advise workers that the activity requires them to use correct lifting, carrying and handling techniques.

And – most importantly – ensure your workers are made aware of and trained in the safe work practices.



Reference your **workbook** to develop practices and procedures for your operation.

Orientation and Training

As an employer, it is your obligation to provide instruction and training for your employees – the type of training will depend on your operations and the hazards identified for your farm.

Some formats of training are ongoing, such as the ongoing review of the farm's safety practices during team meetings, regular inspections and hazard assessments.

Other training is specifically regulated (e.g. WHMIS, First Aid, Confined Space). While the regulations specify certain training requirements it does not exclude you from providing other training (e.g. training employee to prune). As the employer you are responsible to make sure that your employees receive all required training to perform their tasks safely.

There are a number of supports employers can access in order to make sure their employees are properly equipped to work safely on the farm. Farm Safety Nova Scotia provides a number of opportunities for orientation and training support with upcoming workshops listed on their website as well as providing an Online Training Campus.

New Employee Orientation

While training and orientation is imperative for new employees to the farm for obvious reasons – this training is also a good refresher for all employees. It provides an opportunity to review the day-to-day operation, emergency procedures, an overview of first aid facilities, restricted areas (if any exist), hazard controls and any other applicable health and safety procedures, plans, policies or programs.

Basic training should cover the content of the farm's safety plan and must be conducted before the new employee is exposed to any of the assessed hazards on the farm.

The key focus areas for orientation training include:

- Overview of the farm operation.
- The rights and responsibilities of workers.
- Overview of communication process.
- How to safely perform each task.
- Hazard identification and control management.
- Emergency protocol.
- Incident response and reporting.

On-the-job training is an important aspect of a new employee's orientation. This allows them to job shadow their employer, or another employee, in their designated role to learn how a task is done properly before attempting it, under supervision, themselves. You may have a formal sit down orientation with a new worker to review the basics of the farm's safety plan, but then on-the-job training will continue with that worker as they are introduced to their tasks.

TIP

It is important to keep a record of all training programs that take place on the farm. Information should include the date, time, specific training program, and participants. Have participants sign the documentation to confirm they received the training and understood what was taught.



See your **workbook** to develop a list of required training and training records for your farm.

Be Careful of Residual Hazards

Whichever method or combination of methods of hazard control you use, you must ensure it does not create a new or different hazard. For example, if you install a ventilation system to resolve an air-quality issue, you need to also ensure that the ventilation system does not create a noise problem.

Similarly, if the hazard requires the use of safety footwear, make sure they fit the worker properly and do not cause a tripping hazard.

(Source: Small Business Toolkit 2:7 and 2:8)

Remain Focused

Establishing a strong workplace health and safety culture on your farm requires constant vigilance and a commitment to open and transparent communication with everyone on the farm. Training and education needs will evolve as team members and equipment change with the seasons. It's not enough to write the safety plan and expect it to be the solution, the plan must inform every decision made and every action taken each day on the farm.

Section Five:

Staying Prepared

To-do:

- Develop incident investigation plan.
- Develop a remote location plan.
- Map your farm.
- Complete farm contact form.

If an Incident Occurs

With leadership, ongoing training and communications – workplace injuries are preventable.

You can establish a strong safety culture within your organization through an understanding of your environment, continual education, and by empowering your employees to not take on any task unless it can be done safely.

The goal of any farm should be to avoid a workplace injury or incident, but if one does occur you need to be prepared to act quickly.

If an incident occurs, do not disturb an accident scene that has resulted in serious injury or death unless it is necessary to:

- Attend to an injured or deceased person;
- Prevent further injuries; or
- Protect property that is endangered as a result of the accident.

Incident Investigation and Reporting

Incident investigation and reporting should be part of a farm safety plan whereby all incidents are documented, investigated, and follow-up action is taken in order to prevent similar incidents from reoccurring. Incident reporting is not a blaming process, but a means to identify and correct root causes and address the hazard to reduce the chance of re-occurrence.

Incident investigation involves the following:

1. Emergency response – eliminate any further hazards and respond to injuries.
2. Secure the scene – do not disturb the scene, and identify any potential “witnesses” to the incident.
3. Survey the scene – review what happened, talk to “witnesses”
4. Prepare a report – a report of the incident should be documented and include any recommendations for corrective actions.

It is important to determine what types of incidents will be investigated so that everyone is aware. The information gathered should be consistent and documented accordingly.



You will find an example Incident Investigation Policy and Report Forms in the **Workbook**.

Reporting an Accident

An employer is required to report any serious injury or incident that endangers life or causes permanent injury. You must report:

- Fatality – immediately
- Serious injury – as soon as possible or within 24 hours (e.g. unconsciousness)
- Serious incident – as soon as possible or within 24 hours (e.g. major release of hazardous substance).

Report by email, mail or phone:

Phone: 1-800-952-2687

email: ohsdivision@novascotia.ca

There may also be reporting requirements on incidents to WCB Nova Scotia or your private insurer, depending on your insurance choice. These are separate from the reporting to the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

Preparing for an Emergency

The top priority is always to prevent an injury or incident from happening – but if one does occur, an injury to an employee or damage to equipment can be mitigated if addressed quickly.

Being prepared for an emergency is in the best interest of your family, employees, animals, neighbouring farms and visitors.

Creating an emergency plan will provide your family, employees, neighbours and visitors with the confidence that you take their safety seriously as well as make sure that the decisions you make under pressure in an emergency situation have been previously thought-out and reviewed with your team.

1. **Assess Possible Emergency Scenarios:** Prepare a list of all of the possible emergency situations that could occur on the farm, i.e. a chemical spill, machinery or livestock injury, a worker collapsing in a confined space, dangerous weather conditions, fires, explosions, etc.
2. **Plan for Action:** Next to each of the items you've listed as possible emergency scenarios, detail a plan for your team to follow to manage the situation – including role descriptions. It's important that everyone on staff is trained in each role, so that the job will be carried through no matter who is on shift or present in the emergency situation.

3. **Create a Communications System:** When at all possible, make sure that an employee is not working on a task in isolation of others. If more than one employee cannot be physically present to perform a task, make sure that a two-way radio or cell phone is made available. Check in regularly – both through the communications system and in-person. This system should also put in place a system for all employees to “check in” if an emergency occurs; this could be a meeting location off of the property or an outside number to call to act as a “roll call”.
4. **Identify Resources:** Always make sure first aid supplies are monitored and replaced after use in every work location and vehicle. Remember that your best resource in an emergency situation is your team – which means first aid training and CPR should be offered to all employees. Resources must also include a list of emergency contacts – which should be present in multiple locations – and routes to the hospital, police station and fire station.



A contact form for you to include emergency numbers has been inserted in your **workbook**.

First Aid Remote Location Plan

A first aid remote location plan is required when a worksite is more than 30 minutes from an emergency care facility. There are some exceptions to this:

- No worker spends more than 10% of their time at that location within a 4 week period.
- Employees may spend between 10-25% of their time, over a 4 week period at that location, and the employer can ensure:
 - injured person can be transported to an emergency care facility within a reasonable amount of time;
 - a means of transportation;
 - a means of communication
 - first aid supplies and attendants; and
 - hazards and risk of injury are minimal.

If a plan is required it must include:

- a plan for meeting the minimum first aid requirements (supplies and attendants);
- method of transportation of injured employees;
- means of communication;
- number of required attendants and qualifications; and
- list of first aid supplies.

Farm Mapping

To have a clear picture of the farm property it can be useful to draw a map of your farm with all buildings. Buildings should be identified as residence, animal housing, storage, machinery, shop, etc. The hazards or important information for emergency responders should be included, such as: location of fuels, chemicals, etc. AND shutoffs for power, fuels, etc.

It is also useful to map out the surrounding properties which are farmed so that you have a clear idea of how you will respond to an emergency at an off-site location. There are a number of online tools you can access for maps of your farm (e.g. Nova Scotia Coordinate Referencing System viewer).

TIP

Not all farm fields and properties have civic numbers. Be sure to note the closest one so that it can be given in case of an emergency.

This workbook previously discussed the importance of ongoing and open communications with everyone on the farm. These conversations must include time to review the emergency preparedness plan on a consistent basis. Make sure everyone is comfortable with the plan, walk through the scenarios, and take part in drill exercises where people take on different assigned roles.

When an emergency occurs, decisions will be made at a rapid pace, adrenaline will be running high. Having gone over the process multiple times on an ongoing basis will give everyone the confidence they need to act quickly and effectively.

Make the Commitment

A successful farm safety program begins and ends with everyone on the farm making a real commitment to safety.

The commitment to farm safety requires that you take ownership of the health and safety of yourself, your family and your employees by taking preventative and ongoing action to prevent incidents.

The best way to do this is through building and communicating awareness of potential hazards and by providing appropriate training to all persons on your farm.

The actions that you take demonstrate the values and ethics in your safe farm culture.

Keep that commitment and keep records of your progress, not only to track your positive trajectory but as proof of due diligence if an incident were to occur. To help you keep going – and always keep connected – with that commitment, visit and use the personal assessment tools and safety training record log book located in your workbook.

Stay focused, stays committed; and most importantly, stay safe.

A Guide to your Farm Safety Plan was developed with the support of pre-existing workplace health and safety materials.

The team at Farm Safety Nova Scotia are grateful for the work that was achieved through the Small Business Safety Toolkit and the Canada FarmSafe Plan. These materials helped to inform the background and recommendations we have outlined in this manual.

As well, we would like to give credit to the Department of Labour and Advanced Education and WCB Nova Scotia whose detailed information on their individual websites, including their electronic fact-sheets and overviews, provided in-depth reviews of proper planning and following required policies.

